Creating a Safe School Climate

Article Critique

Lesley Taylor Swartz

Liberty University

Creating a Safe School Climate

**Annotated Bibliography/Summary**

The climate within a school can play an enormous role in the academic, social, and psychological outcome of an individual. The contention of Hernandez and Seem (2004) is that the responsibility of creating a safe climate within the school rests on all involved, namely teachers, coaches, staff, administrators, school board, school counselors, parents, bus drivers and the community. Considering school violence to be a systemic problem, requiring a systemic solution, Hernandez and Seem indicate that all parties and stakeholders must work together, toward creating a safe environment for the students.

A few of the ideas expressed by the authors were to have a consistent and clear definition of violent behavior. As stated in the article, the definition of violence is not always physical in nature. Emotional or psychological abuse, such as rejection, social isolation, and rumoring is a form of violence according to the authors’ use of the definition by the Center for Prevention of School Violence.

In addition, the authors argue that the established definition will have no relevance if it is not consistently enforced. As mentioned by the authors, part of the failure in creating a safe climate is the inconsistency with enforcement and discipline as this sends a message to the students that there is no protection.

**Critique**

This article brought to mind the well-known phrase “it takes a village to raise a child”. The school counselor can be a catalyst for change by creating a comprehensive counseling program, training teachers, educating parents, and collaborating with the community.

Research has shown that most students have at some time or another, felt the repercussions from an abusive situation at school, be it, teasing, rejection, isolation, or a physical altercation based on gender, race, culture, appearance, or other. These studies have revealed that this type of treatment decreases morale within the school, which negatively impacts student achievement, social development, and the overall climate of the school.

This brings about further suggestions of the authors in the creation of a safe environment within the school by encouraging accountability, many students today are not held accountable for their actions by parents; therefore, they do not understand the concept of accountability at school. The authors further recommend that educators providing consistency, creating high expectations, and teach the importance of character among the students. Students must understand exactly what is expected of them and discipline should be enforced in a consistent manner.

The school counselor has various roles within a school; however, leading the cause to create a safe environment for students is one of priority if children are to be expected to learn, grown, and develop in a positive way.

**Reference:**

Hernandez, T. & Seem, S. (2004, April). A safe school climate: A systemic approach and the school counselor. *Professional School Counseling*, 7(4), 256-262.